

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A pneumatic tire comprising a tread, the tread having a central tread width that is divided into a central tread zone and opposing lateral tread zones, the tire further comprising shoulder regions extending from each lateral tread zone, the tread comprising a plurality of tread elements separated by lateral grooves in the lateral tread zones, and elongated pads in the lateral grooves, the pads extending from between a pair of the tread elements and into a shoulder region, wherein the tire is further characterized by
each pad having a radial height less than an adjacent tread element and a base width greater than 50% of the width of the lateral grooves.
2. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the tread has an elongated pad in every lateral groove in the lateral tread zones.
3. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein circumferentially adjacent pads have different radial lengths.
4. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a tapering cross-sectional configuration along the smallest dimension.
5. The pneumatic tire of claim 4 wherein the cross-sectional configuration is triangular or trapezoidal.
6. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a constant width.
7. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a non-constant width.
8. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a maximum radial height of at 30% of the non-skid tread depth.

9. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a base width of 50 - 90 % of the lateral groove width.
10. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads extend through the entire shoulder region of the tire.
11. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads are located between every other tread element in the lateral tread zones.
12. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pad has a radially outer surface and the radially outer surface is parallel to the tread surface.
13. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the axially inner and axially outer ends of the pad have tapering configurations.
14. The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pad has a pair of opposing sides, the sides each being adjacent a tread element, wherein the sides are inclined relative to the radial direction of the tire.